UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

ROBERT LIONEL SANFORD,
CDCR #V-25176,

Plaintiff,

vs.

JOHN DOE, Director, California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation; L.E. SCRIBNER, Warden, Calipatria State Prison; M. LEVIN, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Calipatria State Prison; S. THOMAS, Nurse Practitioner, Calipatria State Prison; R. SAWTELL, LVN, Calipatria State Prison; DEBRA DEXTER, Warden, Ironwood State Prison; D. HOLBROOK, Inmate Appeals Coordinator; L. BONNETT, Inmate Appeals Coordinator,

Defendants.

Civil No. 08-1049 H (PCL)

ORDER:

(1) GRANTING MOTION TO PROCEED *IN FORMA PAUPERIS*, IMPOSING NO INITIAL PARTIAL FILING FEE AND GARNISHING $350 BALANCE FROM PRISON TRUST ACCOUNT [Doc. No. 2];

(2) DENYING MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL WITHOUT PREJUDICE PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1) [Doc. No. 3]

AND

(3) DIRECTING U.S. MARSHAL TO EFFECT SERVICE OF SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT PURSUANT TO FED.R.CIV.P. 4(c)(2) AND 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d)

Robert Lionel Sanford, ("Plaintiff"), a prisoner currently incarcerated at Ironwood State Prison ("ISP") in Blythe, California, and proceeding pro se, has filed a civil rights Complaint.

Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief and damages against Defendants, all prison officials at ISP and Calipatria State Prison ("CAL") pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 based on claims that they violated due process and his right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. (Compl. at 2-5, 7.) Specifically, Plaintiff claims that on June 26 and 27, 2007, CAL medical personnel acted with deliberate indifference to his serious medical needs by delaying his transfer to a hospital outside the facility for 12 hours while he was hemorrhaging from complications after nasal surgery . (*Id.* at 1, 4, 14-15.) Plaintiff further claims ISP officials denied him due process by hindering his efforts to file CDC 602 administrative grievances regarding the incident after he was apparently transferred to ISP. (*Id.* at 5, 10-13.)

Plaintiff has not prepaid the $350 filing fee mandated by 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a); instead, he has filed a Motion to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis* ("IFP") pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) [Doc. No. 2], as well as a Motion for Appointment of Counsel [Doc. No. 3].

I.

MOTION TO PROCEED IFP

All parties instituting any civil action, suit or proceeding in a district court of the United States, except an application for writ of habeas corpus, must pay a filing fee of $350. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a). An action may proceed despite a party's failure to pay only if the party is granted leave to proceed IFP pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). *See Andrews v. Cervantes*, 493 F.3d 1047, 1051 (9th Cir. 2007); *Rodriguez v. Cook*, 169 F.3d 1176, 1177 (9th Cir. 1999). Prisoners granted leave to proceed IFP however, remain obligated to pay the entire fee in installments, regardless of whether the action is ultimately dismissed for any reason. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1) & (2).

The Court finds that Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit which complies with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1), and has attached a certified copy of his trust account statement pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2) and S.D. CAL. CIVLR 3.2. Plaintiff's trust account statement shows an average monthly balance of $.30 and average monthly deposits of $2.25 in his trust account during the six-month period preceding the filing of his Complaint. However, Plaintiff has a negative account balance of $12.20 due to legal postage holds placed his account. Therefore, the Court finds Plaintiff has insufficient funds from which to pay any initial filing fee. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4) (providing that "[i]n no event shall a prisoner be prohibited from bringing a civil action or appealing a civil action or criminal judgment for the reason that the prisoner has no assets and no means by which to pay the initial partial filing fee."); *Taylor v. Delatoore*, 281 F.3d 844, 850 (9th Cir. 2002) (finding that 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4) acts as a "safety-valve" preventing dismissal of a prisoner's IFP case based solely on a "failure to pay ... due to the lack of funds available to him when payment is ordered.").

Accordingly, the Court **GRANTS** Plaintiff's Motion to Proceed IFP [Doc. No. 2] and assesses no initial partial filing fee per 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). However, the Court further orders the Secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation ("CDCR") to garnish the $350 balance of the filing fees owed in this case, collect and forward them to the Clerk of the Court pursuant to the installment payment provisions set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1).

II.

MOTION FOR APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL

Plaintiff also requests the appointment of counsel to assist him in prosecuting this civil action. "[T]here is no absolute right to counsel in civil proceedings." *Hedges v. Resolution Trust Corp. (In re Hedges)*, 32 F.3d 1360, 1363 (9th Cir. 1994) (citation omitted). Thus, federal courts do not have the authority "to make coercive appointments of counsel." *Mallard v. United States District Court*, 490 U.S. 296, 310 (1989).

However, "[t]itle 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1) permits the district court, in its discretion, to 'request an attorney to represent any person unable to afford counsel.'" *Solis v. County of Los Angeles*, 514 F.3d 946, 958 (9th Cir. 2008) (quoting 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1)); *see also Agyeman v. Corr. Corp. of Am.*, 390 F.3d 1101, 1103 (9th Cir. 2004). Such discretion may be exercised upon a showing of exceptional circumstances. *See Terrell v. Brewer*, 935 F.2d 1015, 1017 (9th Cir. 1991); *Burns v. County of King*, 883 F.2d 819, 823 (9th Cir. 1989). "To show exceptional circumstances the litigant must demonstrate the likelihood of success and complexity of the legal issues involved." *Burns*, 883 F.2d at 823 (citation omitted); *Hedges*, 32 F.3d at 1363; *Wood v.*

Housewright, 900 F.2d 1332, 1335 (9th Cir. 1990). Neither the likelihood of success nor the complexity of the case are dispositive; both must be considered. *Terrell*, 935 F.2d at 1017; *Wilborn v. Escalderon*, 789 F.2d 1328, 1331 (9th Cir. 1986).

Here, for the reasons set forth below, it appears that at this stage of the proceedings, Plaintiff has a sufficient grasp of his case, the legal issues involved, and is able to adequately articulate the factual basis of his claims. Under these circumstances, the Court DENIES Plaintiff's Motion for appointment of counsel without prejudice at this time. *See LaMere v. Risley*, 827 F.2d 622, 626 (9th Cir. 1987); *Terrell*, 935 F.2d at 1017.

III.

SUA SPONTE SCREENING PER 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e) AND 1915A

The Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA") obligates the Court to review complaints filed by all persons proceeding IFP and by those, like Plaintiff, who are "incarcerated or detained in any facility [and] accused of, sentenced for, or adjudicated delinquent for, violations of criminal law or the terms or conditions of parole, probation, pretrial release, or diversionary program," "as soon as practicable after docketing." *See* 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b). Under these provisions of the PLRA, the Court must sua sponte dismiss complaints, or any portions thereof, which are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or which seek damages from defendants who are immune. *See* 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A; *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc) (§ 1915(e)(2)); *Resnick v. Hayes*, 213 F.3d 443, 446 (9th Cir. 2000) (§ 1915A); *see also Barren v. Harrington*, 152 F.3d 1193, 1194 (9th Cir. 1998) (discussing § 1915A). "[W]hen determining whether a complaint states a claim, a court must accept as true all allegations of material fact and must construe those facts in the light most favorable to the plaintiff." *Resnick*, 213 F.3d at 447; *Barren*, 152 F.3d at 1194 (noting that § 1915(e)(2) "parallels the language of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6)").

Here, the Court finds Plaintiff's allegations are adequate to survive initial the sua sponte screening required by 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A(b). Therefore, U.S. Marshal service on Plaintiff's behalf is warranted. *See Lopez*, 203 F.3d at 1126-27; 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d) ("The officers of the court shall issue and serve all process, and perform all duties in [IFP] cases.");

FED.R.CIV.P. 4(c)(2) (providing that "service be effected by a United States marshal, deputy Untied States marshal, or other officer specially appointed by the court ... when the plaintiff is authorized to proceed *in forma pauperis* pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915."). Plaintiff is cautioned, however, that "the sua sponte screening and dismissal procedure is cumulative of, and not a substitute for, any subsequent Rule 12(b)(6) motion that [a defendant] may choose to bring." *Teahan v. Wilhelm*, 481 F. Supp. 2d 1115, 1119 (S.D. Cal. 2007).

IV.

CONCLUSION AND ORDER

Good cause appearing, **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that:

1. Plaintiff's Motion to Proceed IFP pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) [Doc. No. 2] is **GRANTED**;

2. Plaintiff's Motion for Appointment of Counsel [Doc. No. 3] is **DENIED**;

3. The Secretary of the CDCR, or his designee, is ordered to collect from Plaintiff's prison trust account the $350 balance of the civil filing fee owed in this case by collecting monthly payments in an amount equal to twenty percent (20%) of the preceding month's income credited to the account and forward payments to the Clerk of the Court each time the amount in the account exceeds $10 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). ALL PAYMENTS SHALL BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED BY THE NAME AND NUMBER ASSIGNED TO THIS ACTION.

4. The Clerk of the Court is directed to serve a copy of this order on Matthew Cate, Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, P.O. Box 942883, Sacramento, California 94283-0001.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that:

5. The Clerk shall issue a summons upon Defendants, and forward it to Plaintiff along with a blank U.S. Marshal Form 285 for each of these Defendants. In addition, the Clerk shall provide Plaintiff with a certified copy of this Order, and certified copies of his Complaint and the summons for purposes of serving each Defendant. Upon receipt of this "IFP Package," Plaintiff is directed to complete the Form 285s as completely and accurately as possible, and to

return them to the United States Marshal according to the instructions provided by the Clerk in the letter accompanying his IFP package. Thereafter, the U.S. Marshal shall serve a copy of the Complaint and summons upon each Defendant as directed by Plaintiff on each Form 285. All costs of service shall be advanced by the United States. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d); FED.R.CIV.P. 4(c)(2).

6. Defendants are thereafter **ORDERED** to reply to the Complaint within the time provided by the applicable provisions of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(a). *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(g)(2) (while Defendants may occasionally be permitted to "waive the right to reply to any action brought by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility under section 1983," once the Court has conducted its sua sponte screening pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) and § 1915A(b), and thus, has made a preliminary determination based on the face on the pleading alone that Plaintiff has a "reasonable opportunity to prevail on the merits," Defendants are required to respond).

7. Plaintiff shall serve upon Defendants or, if appearance has been entered by counsel, upon Defendants' counsel, a copy of every further pleading or other document submitted for consideration of the Court. Plaintiff shall include with the original paper to be filed with the Clerk of the Court a certificate stating the manner in which a true and correct copy of any document was served on Defendants, or counsel for Defendants, and the date of service. Any paper received by the Court which has not been filed with the Clerk or which fails to include a Certificate of Service will be disregarded.

DATED: August 29, 2008``

HON. MARILYN L. HUFF
United States District Judge